14p

No 220

BUNTY

PICTURE STORY LIBRARY FOR GIRLS

Two chums find a doll on the roof of their tower block. An ordinary doll—or is it? Suddenly unexplained things happen and they're all due to

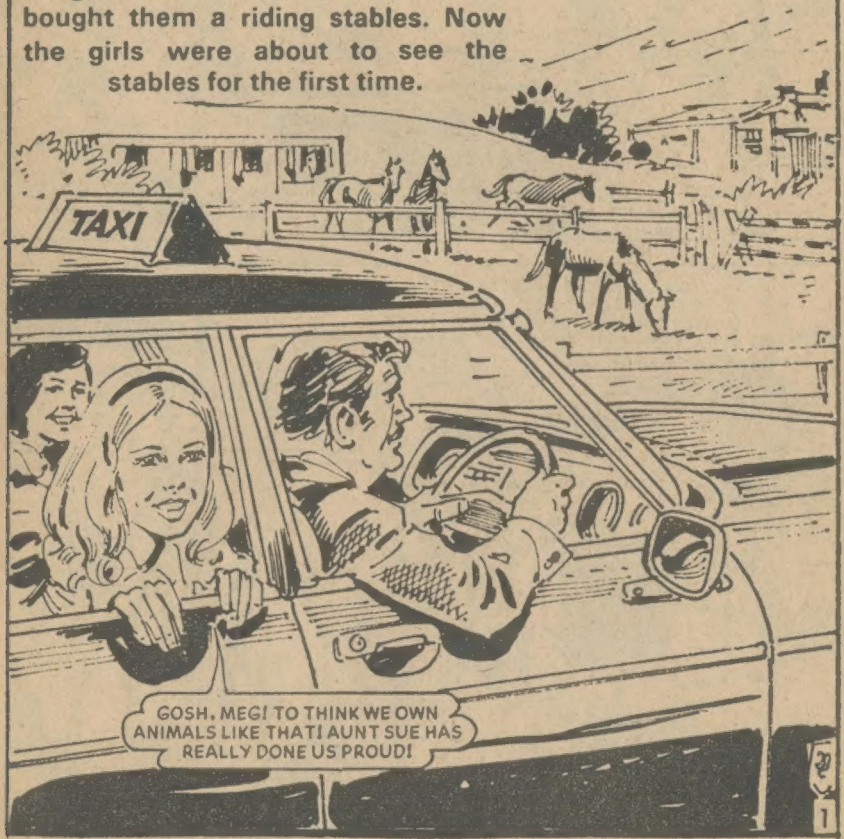
LITTLE DOLLY DEMON

JUDY LIBRARY Nº220

LOOK FOR THIS EXCITING STORY NOW!

Heartbreak Stables

JILL TRAVERS and her cousin, Meg Day, loved horses and were delighted when their rich Aunt Sue bought them a riding stables. Now the girls were about to see the stables for the first time.



GOOD MORNING. YOU MUST BE THE NEW CLIENTS FOR RIDING LESSONS. I'M DELIA MADISON.
I'M JILL TRAVERS. AND THIS IS MY COUSIN, MEG DAY. BUT WE DON'T NEED LESSONS— WE'RE THE OWNERS!

NEW OWNERS? I DIDN'T KNOW COLONEL HUTCHINS HAD SOLD THESE STABLES.
YES—OUR AUNT SUE BOUGHT THEM FOR US.
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM, DELIA?
2

THERE SEEMS TO BE A MIX-UP, COLONEL. PERHAPS YOU CAN SORT IT OUT. THESE TWO CLAIM THEY OWN THE STABLES!
WHAT? THERE HAS BEEN A MISTAKE—I HAVEN'T SOLD MY ESTABLISHMENT TO ANYONE.
BUT YOU MUST HAVE DONE!
COULD THEY MEAN BIRCHFIELD STABLES—THE OLD GRENVILLE PLACE? WHEN THEY SAID STABLES, I NATURALLY BROUGHT THEM HERE.
YOUNG WOMAN, I ASSURE YOU I HAVE NOT!
I DID HEAR THAT BIRCH-FIELD STABLES WERE SOLD RECENTLY.
3

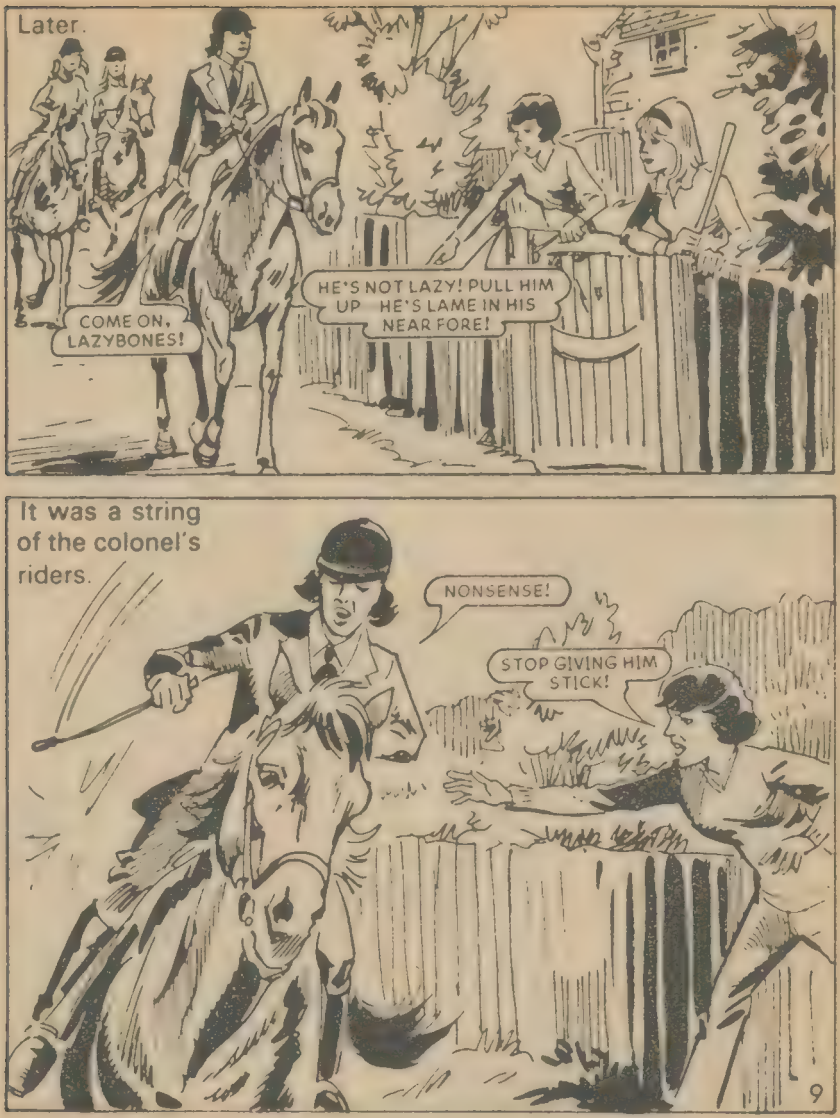
INCREDIBLE! FANCY MISTAKING MY ESTABLISHMENT FOR THE BIRCHFIELD PLACE! DO YOU MEAN TO START UP A RIDING STABLES?
YES. WE DO!
SORRY ABOUT THE MIX-UP, COLONEL. COME ON, MEG, LET'S GO.
I HAVE A VERY EXCLUSIVE CLIENTELE. AND I CAN SAFELY SAY THAT NONE OF MY PEOPLE WILL EVER CHANGE TO YOU. YOU'LL BE WASTING YOUR TIME.
THAT'S OUR BUSINESS!
COOL IT, MEG. DRIVER, WILL YOU TAKE US TO THE BIRCHFIELD PLACE, PLEASE?
4

Later.
IT'S A RUIN, MEG!
MAYBE IT'S BETTER INSIDE THAN OUT, JILL. I'LL FISH OUT THE KEY...
SITTING-ROOM. IT'S FURNISHED—AND THICK WITH DUST. WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE UPSTAIRS?
I SHUDDER TO THINK! LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE KITCHEN. I COULD USE A CUP OF TEA.
5

THERE'S A LETTER, ADDRESSED TO US. I... MEG? WHERE ARE YOU?
OUT HERE. COME AND SEE!
SEE? THE STABLE YARD IS QUITE LARGE, REALLY. LET'S TAKE A LOOK INSIDE THE BUILDINGS.
IF YOU INSIST! WHAT A MESS!
The stable-block consisted of separate tack and feed rooms, and then the stables themselves.
UGH! THE PLACE IS FULL OF SPIDERS AND COBWEBS AND SMELLS MUSTY! WHAT HAVE WE LET OURSELVES IN FOR?
A LOAD OF HARD WORK! COME ON—LET'S GET BACK INTO THE YARD AGAIN.

PONIES! FIVE OF THEM! ARE THEY OURS?
COULD BE! OH! THIS LETTER! I'D FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT. MAYBE IT WILL HAVE THE ANSWER.
YES, THEY ARE OURS. THIS IS FROM THE OLD OWNER, MR GRENVILLE. IT TELLS WHICH OF THOSE FIELDS BELONG TO US. THERE ARE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PONIES, TOO.
WELL, WE MIGHT AS WELL GET TO KNOW OUR PONIES. LET'S GET THEM INTO THE YARD AND HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT THEM.

THIS IS SINNER. WHO IS EIGHT. NEXT ALONG IS HIPSTER, A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD. THEN PSALM, AGED SEVEN AND SPORT WHO IS TEN. THE LAST IN THE LINE IS PRUDENCE, KNOWN AS PRU. SHE'S THE PENSIONER OF THE SCHOOL—A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD.
HI, PRU! YOU LOOK A SWEETIE!
WELL, THAT'S IT. WITH THESE ANIMALS WE'RE GOING TO START OUR VERY OWN RIDING STABLES AND BECOME VERY SUCCESSFUL.
WE HOPE! LET'S CLEAN UP THOSE STALLS AND BOXES. THEN WE CAN GIVE THE PONIES A FEED. THEN WE CAN STRAIGHTEN THE TACK ROOM AND SORT OUT THE STABLE EQUIPMENT. AFTER THAT WE MIGHT EVEN SORT OUT THE KITCHEN!
Two hours of back-breaking work followed, then after their make-shift lunch . . .
I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN GET THIS PLACE SORTED OUT INTO A PAYING PROPOSITION. THE COLONEL HAS PLUSH SURROUNDINGS, GOOD RIDING PONIES, AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE. I'VE NEVER TRIED TO TEACH ANYONE TO RIDE IN MY LIFE!


Later.
COME ON, LAZYBONES!
HE'S NOT LAZY! PULL HIM UP HE'S LAME IN HIS NEAR FORE!
It was a string of the colonel's riders.
NONSENSE!
STOP GIVING HIM STICK!
9

OFF, YOU!
OH!
OH, CRIKEY! THERE'S NO HOLDING MEG WHEN SHE GETS HER TEMPER UP!
THOUGHT AS MUCH! HE'S GOT A STONE WEDGED IN HIS HOOF. NEVER MIND, BOY, I'LL SOON HAVE IT OUT.
10

THERE IT'S OUT!
HOW DARE YOU ATTACK ME! HOW DARE YOU MEDDLE WITH ONE OF OUR HORSES!
I...I...I'LL COMPLAIN ABOUT YOU TO THE COLONEL!
GO AHEAD! AND BE SURE TO TELL HIM WHY I LOST MY TEMPER WITH YOU. YOU SHOULD HAVE NOTICED HE WAS LAME. THAT'S A FINE HORSE I SHOULD THINK THE COLONEL WOULD EXPECT YOU TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF IT.
I'M GOOD AT MY JOB. AND THE COLONEL KNOWS IT. STILL, WE'LL SAY NO MORE ABOUT THIS. I EXPECT SEEING THIS GROTTY OLD PLACE HAS UNHINGED YOUR MIND!

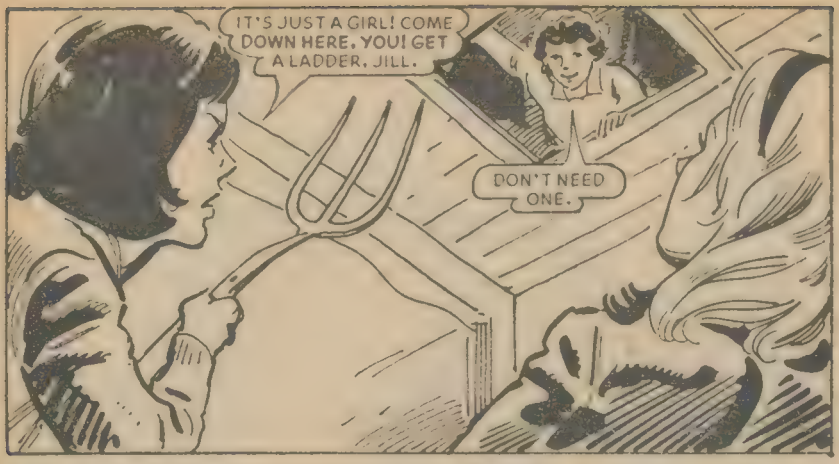
I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU LOSING YOUR TEMPER, MEG, BUT I RECKON WE'VE MADE AN ENEMY OF DELIA.
CAN'T BE HELPED. AS FOR THE OTHER PROBLEMS. WE'LL COPE, SOMEHOW. NOW, LET'S GET BACK TO WORK.

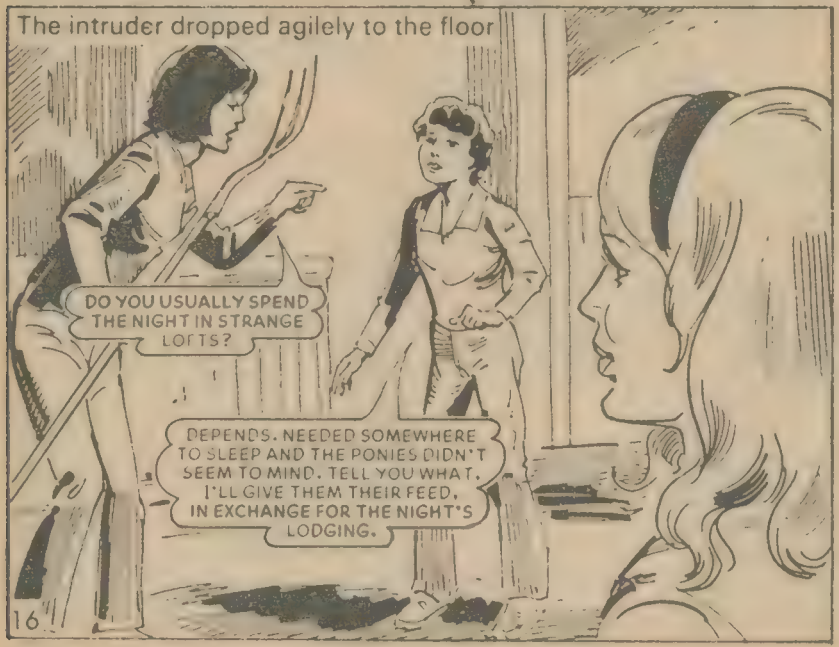
During the next few days, the girls combined caring for the ponies with clearing up the cottage and working in the garden.

THE OUTSIDE OF THE COTTAGE NEEDS PAINTING, MEG. WHEN WE'VE GOT THE TIME.
THE STABLE BLOCK MUST COME FIRST. THERE'S A LOT OF REPAIRS TO BE DONE THERE. I... HEY-UP! HERE COMES DEADLY DELIA!
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME WORKING ON THIS PLACE. AFTER A FEW MONTHS YOU'LL HAVE TO SELL. AND THEN MY FATHER CAN PUT IN BID FOR THE LAND. HE WOULD HAVE BOUGHT IT BEFORE. BUT HE DIDN'T HEAR ABOUT THE SALE IN TIME.

THAT'S BECAUSE IT WAS A PRIVATE DEAL BETWEEN OUR AUNT AND MR GRENVILLE. WHAT'S YOUR FATHER'S INTEREST IN THIS LAND?
HE WANTS TO BUILD A HUNTING LODGE FOR BUSINESS MEN. WHEN THE LODGE IS FINISHED I'LL INVITE YOU BOTH BACK FOR A SHORT WEEKEND!
SHE'S VERY SURE WE'VE BITTEN OFF MORE THAN WE CAN CHEW.
SO, WE'LL SHOW HER WE'VE GOT STRONG TEETH! NOW, LET'S FORGET HER SNEERS AND GET ON WITH SAVING OUR STABLES!

The days passed, each crammed with hard work. Early one morning, when the girls went to feed and water the ponies...


IT'S JUST A GIRL! COME DOWN HERE, YOU! GET A LADDER, JILL.
DON'T NEED ONE.


The intruder dropped agilely to the floor
DO YOU USUALLY SPEND THE NIGHT IN STRANGE LOFTS?
DEPENDS. NEEDED SOMEWHERE TO SLEEP AND THE PONIES DIDN'T SEEM TO MIND. TELL YOU WHAT. I'LL GIVE THEM THEIR FEED, IN EXCHANGE FOR THE NIGHT'S LODGING.

I COULD USE SOME BREAKFAST MYSELF. I'LL PAY WITH WORK- ANY JOB YOU LIKE. HOW ABOUT IT?
YOU'RE A COOL CUSTOMER! OK WE'LL GIVE YOU SOME BREAKFAST.
AND AFTERWARDS YOU CAN TELL US WHO YOU ARE AND WHY YOU NEEDED TO SLEEP IN OUR HAYLOFT.

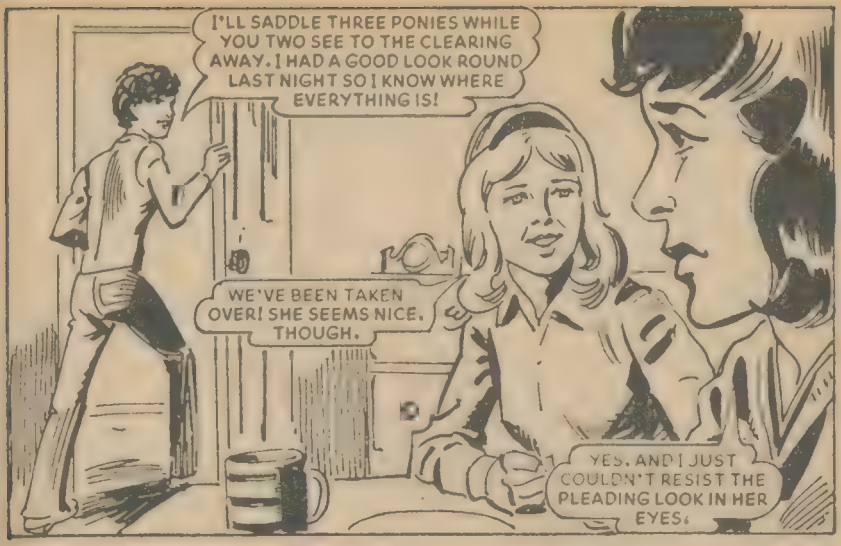
The girl ate heartily, then volunteered that her name was Melinda and that she was an orphan

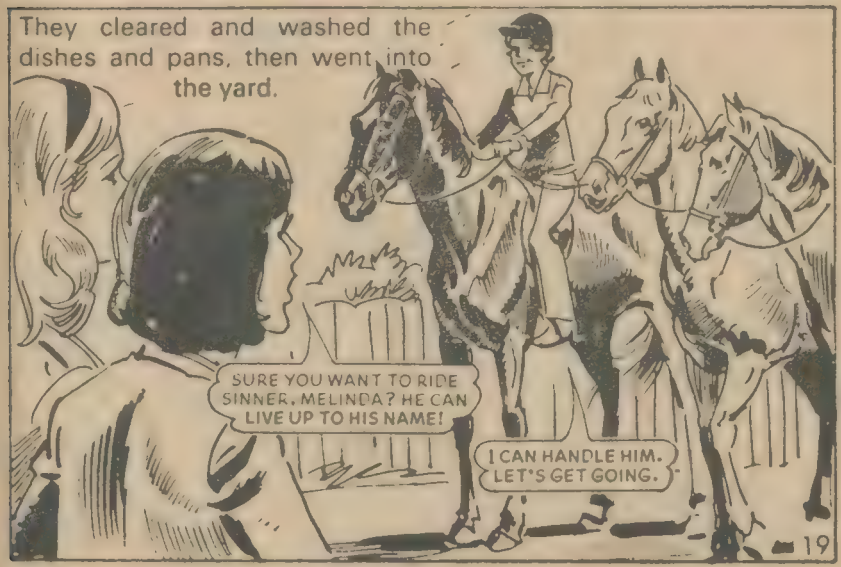
I LIVE AT A CHILDREN'S HOME ABOUT THIRTY MILES AWAY. WELL, AT LEAST I WAS LIVING THERE, UNTIL I RAN AWAY. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SEND ME BACK, ARE YOU?
WE SHOULD DO, MEG.
THAT'S FOR SURE.

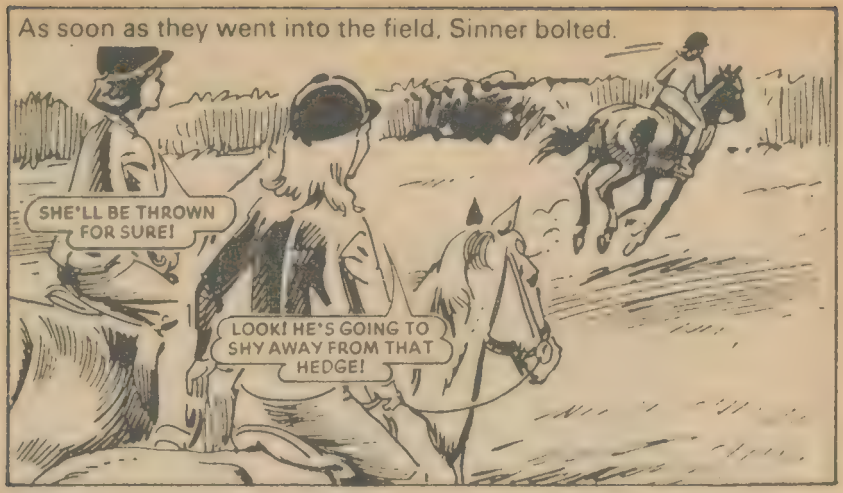
PLEASE DON'T—NOT JUST YET. THE OTHER KIDS ARE AWAY ON HOLIDAY AND I'M THERE BY MYSELF. PLEASE DON'T SEND ME BACK! LET ME STAY WITH YOU FOR A FEW DAYS. PLEASE!
WELL... MEG!
LET ME THINK.

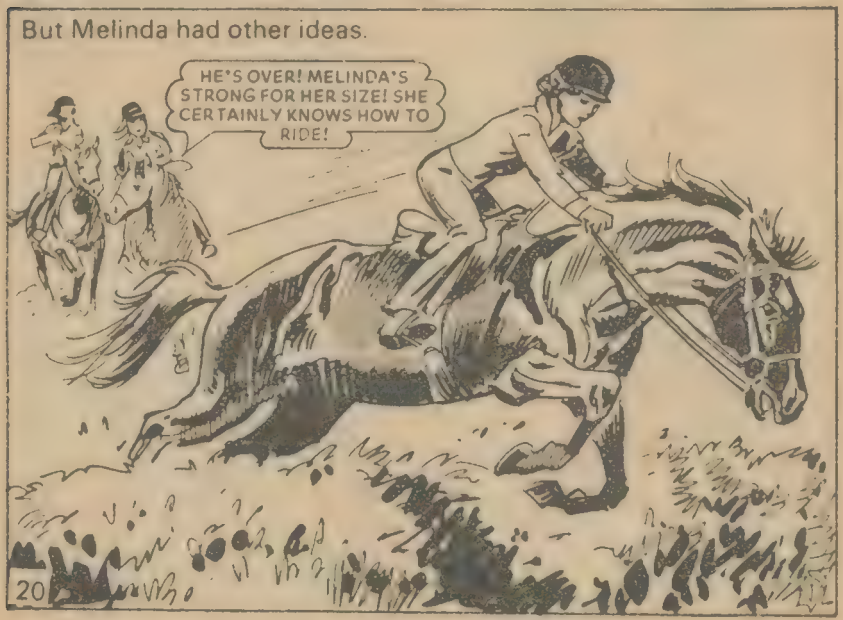
Meg was silent for a couple of minutes. Then

OH. ALL RIGHT. YOU CAN STAY—BUT IT IS ONLY FOR A FEW DAYS.
OH. THAT'S WONDERFUL! THANKS! I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP YOU. WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO DO THIS MORNING?
WE THOUGHT ABOUT CHECKING OUR BOUNDARY FENCES IN CASE ANY OF THEM NEED REPAIRING.


I'LL SADDLE THREE PONIES WHILE YOU TWO SEE TO THE CLEARING AWAY. I HAD A GOOD LOOK ROUND LAST NIGHT SO I KNOW WHERE EVERYTHING IS!
WE'VE BEEN TAKEN OVER! SHE SEEMS NICE, THOUGH.
YES. AND I JUST COULDN'T RESIST THE PLEADING LOOK IN HER EYES.

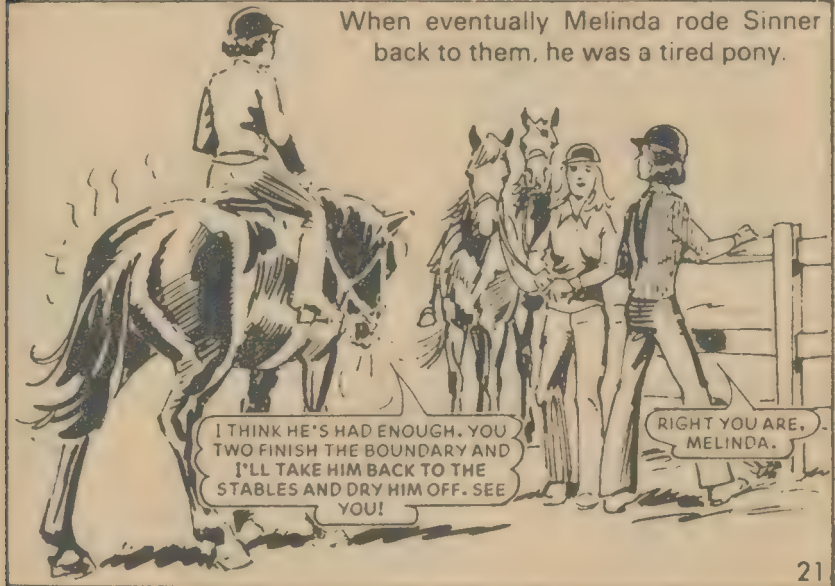

They cleared and washed the dishes and pans, then went into the yard.
SURE YOU WANT TO RIDE SINNER, MELINDA? HE CAN LIVE UP TO HIS NAME!
I CAN HANDLE HIM. LET'S GET GOING.

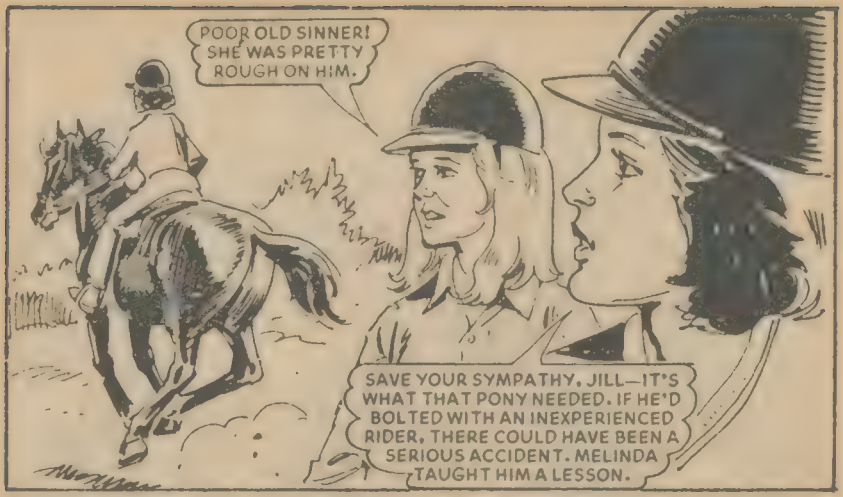

As soon as they went into the field, Sinner bolted.
SHE'LL BE THROWN FOR SURE!
LOOK! HE'S GOING TO SHY AWAY FROM THAT HEDGE!


But Melinda had other ideas.
HE'S OVER! MELINDA'S STRONG FOR HER SIZE! SHE CERTAINLY KNOWS HOW TO RIDE!

Once over the hedge, Sinner tried to stop but any change to a slower pace was prevented by Melinda.

When eventually Melinda rode Sinner back to them, he was a tired pony.


I THINK HE'S HAD ENOUGH. YOU TWO FINISH THE BOUNDARY AND I'LL TAKE HIM BACK TO THE STABLES AND DRY HIM OFF. SEE YOU!
RIGHT YOU ARE, MELINDA.


POOR OLD SINNER! SHE WAS PRETTY ROUGH ON HIM.
SAVE YOUR SYMPATHY, JILL—IT'S WHAT THAT PONY NEEDED. IF HE'D BOLTED WITH AN INEXPERIENCED RIDER, THERE COULD HAVE BEEN A SERIOUS ACCIDENT. MELINDA TAUGHT HIM A LESSON.

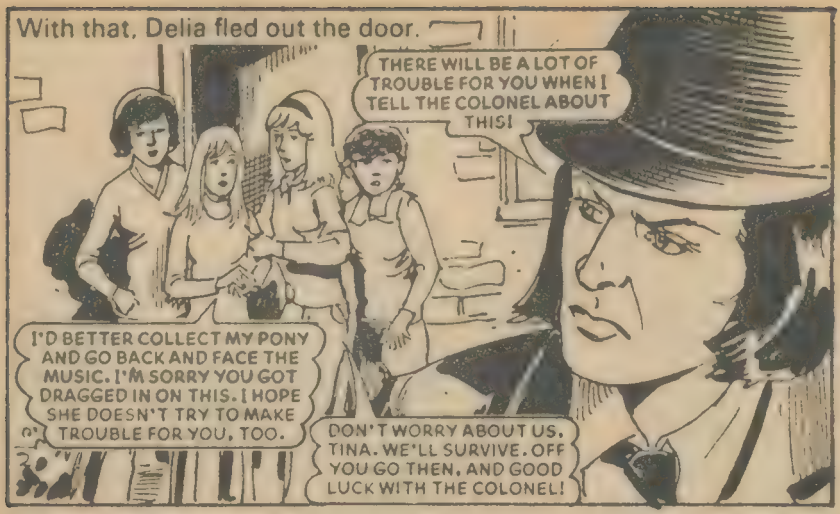
Later, when the girls returned to the yard, they heard voices in stables and went to investigate.
HELLO? WHO'S THIS THEN?
SHE'S TINA. AND SHE'S STAYING AT COLONEL HUTCHIN'S PLACE.
HE'S MY UNCLE. I'M HIDING FROM HIS ASSISTANT, DELIA MADISON.

UNCLE HUGH SAID SHE WAS TO TEACH ME TO RIDE. HE THINKS THAT EVEN POOR RELATIONS SHOULD KNOW WHO TO HANDLE A HORSE. DELIA WAS NASTY TO ME—THAT'S WHY I DODGED AWAY AND HID IN HERE. I- I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
CERTAINLY NOT! DELIA'S NO FRIEND OF OURS! PERHAPS NOW YOU'D LIKE TO COME UP TO THE COTTAGE FOR SOME COFFEE.
HOW LONG ARE YOU STAYING WITH THE COLONEL, TINA?
ONLY FOR ABOUT A FORTNIGHT. I DIDN'T WANT TO COME AT ALL, BUT I'M GLAD MY PARENTS PERSUADED ME. YOU'RE VERY NICE. HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU HAVE HIRING YOUR PONIES?
WE DON'T HAVE ANY YET. WE'VE STILL GOT A LOT OF WORK TO DO TO THE STABLES. AND THE PONIES. MOST OF THEM ARE . . .
LOOK! THERE'S A FACE AT THE WINDOW!

Next moment
YOU'VE GOT TO COME WITH ME! THE COLONEL SAID YOU WERE NOT TO MIX WITH PEOPLE LIKE THESE!
THEY'RE MY FRIENDS! YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO TALK ABOUT THEM LIKE THAT!
DON'T YOU SHOUT AT ME, YOU LITTLE BRAT!
YOU YOU CAT!

Tina threw herself at Delia. Melinda was close behind, and down went Delia
JILL. DON'T JUST SIT THERE! COME AND GIVE ME A HAND!
DELIA ASKED FOR WHAT SHE'S GETTING. SHE IS A NASTY CAT. I . . . OH. ALL RIGHT!

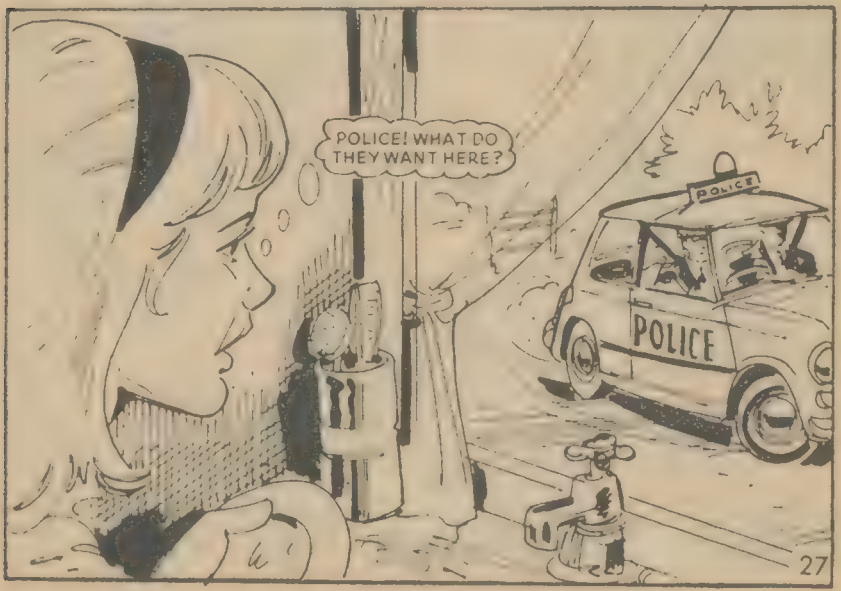
COOL IT. YOU TWO. DELIA OUT!
AND DON'T MARCH INTO OUR HOUSE UNINVITED AGAIN!


With that, Delia fled out the door.
THERE WILL BE A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR YOU WHEN I TELL THE COLONEL ABOUT THIS!
I'D BETTER COLLECT MY PONY AND GO BACK AND FACE THE MUSIC. I'M SORRY YOU GOT DRAGGED IN ON THIS. I HOPE SHE DOESN'T TRY TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR YOU, TOO.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT US, TINA. WE'LL SURVIVE. OFF YOU GO THEN, AND GOOD LUCK WITH THE COLONEL!

That night they made-up a bed for Melinda in the living-room.
HOPE YOU SLEEP WELL, MELINDA. THAT SOFA ISN'T VERY COMFY.
DON'T WORRY—I'LL BE FINE. 'NIGHT, MEG! 'NIGHT, JILL!

Jill and Meg were up at their usual early hour next morning, fed the ponies, then had breakfast.

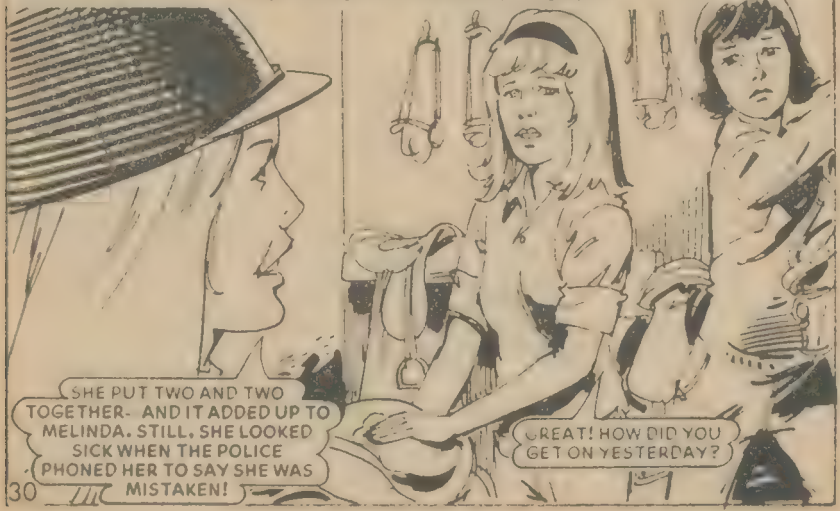
WHEN WE'VE SEEN TO THE DISHES, WE'D BETTER GROOM THE PONIES. I DO WISH SINNER DIDN'T MAKE SUCH A FUSS ABOUT BEING GROOMED!
MELINDA CAN HANDLE SINNER—LEAVE HIM TO HER. I'LL JUST TAKE HER A CUP OF TEA, THEN I'LL BE WITH YOU.



GOOD MORNING, MISS. WE'VE BEEN INFORMED THAT YOU ARE SHELTERING A GIRL WHO RAN AWAY FROM A HOME NEAR HERE. A MISS DELIA MADISON PHONED US EARLIER THIS MORNING.
NOW WE'RE FOR IT!
MEG, THEY'VE COME ABOUT . . .
YES, I HEARD. THERE'S NO RUNAWAY GIRL HERE, SERGEANT. YOU CAN SEARCH THE COTTAGE AND THE STABLES IF YOU LIKE.
THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY. OBVIOUSLY MISS MADISON WAS MISTAKEN. WE'RE SORRY TO HAVE BOTHERED YOU.
THAT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT.

GOSH. YOU WERE COOL! WHERE IS MELINDA?
SHE DECIDED TO RETURN TO THE HOME MUST HAVE LEFT BEFORE WE WERE UP. I FOUND THIS NOTE ON THE MANTLEPIECE. HERE, READ IT.
Had a hunch Delia might use me to make trouble for you two. You've enough problems without that. Thanks for being so kind to me. Be sure to let Sinner know who's boss.
Love Melinda.

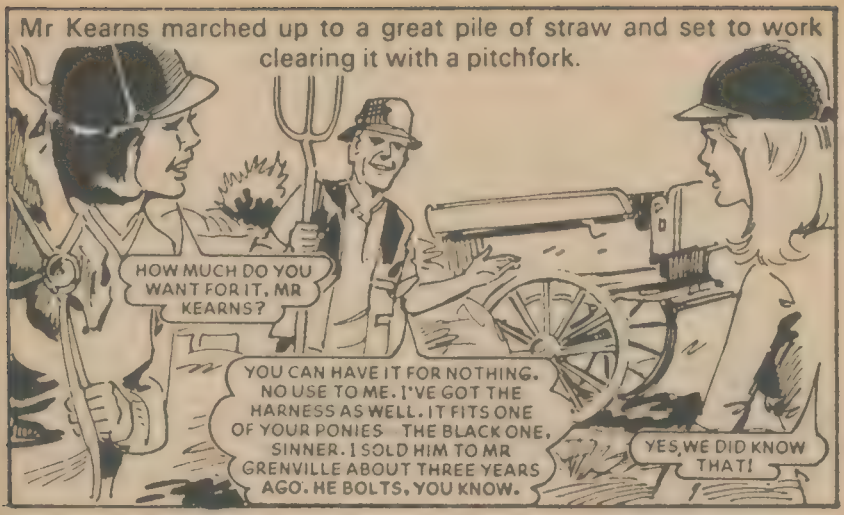
Tina turned up later that morning and provided the answer. A stable lad had heard that a girl had run away from the Home and mentioned it in front of Delia.


SHE PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER- AND IT ADDED UP TO MELINDA. STILL, SHE LOOKED SICK WHEN THE POLICE PHONED HER TO SAY SHE WAS MISTAKEN!
GREAT! HOW DID YOU GET ON YESTERDAY?

TALK ROOM TT.
UNCLE HUGH TOOK DELIA'S SIDE. TOLD ME OFF ROTTEN. CALLED ME COMMON— CALLED YOU A COUPLE OF NAMES, TOO. I LOST MY TEMPER AND TOLD HIM HE'S A POMPOUS SNOB! I'VE DECIDED TO GO HOME THIS AFTERNOON. BUT I WANTED TO SEE YOU BEFORE I WENT.
I'M SORRY YOUR HOLIDAY WAS A FLOP, TINA.
IT WASN'T A COMPLETE FLOP—I MET YOU TWO, AND MELINDA. I'M OFF NOW— GOT TO SEE TO MY PACKING. BEST OF LUCK WITH YOUR RIDING-SCHOOL.
WE CERTAINLY NEED IT! 'BYE, TINA!
A month or so later.
HOME, AT LAST! WE'RE STOCKED UP FOR ANOTHER WEEK. IF ONLY THE SHOPS WEREN'T SO FAR AWAY.
OR THE BUS STOP WAS NEARER. MUST BE ALL OF FIVE MILES TO IT FROM THE COTTAGE. I WISH WE COULD AFFORD TO BUY A CAR.

NO CLIENTS YET—SO NO CAR. THE BUDGET MIGHT RUN TO A CART, THOUGH, WITH ONE OF THE PONIES TO PULL IT.
THAT'S AN IDEA! AFTER DINNER WE'LL SADDLE A COUPLE OF PONIES AND RIDE ROUND THE FARMS. MAYBE WE'LL FIND A FARMER WHO HAS A CHEAP ONE FOR SALE.

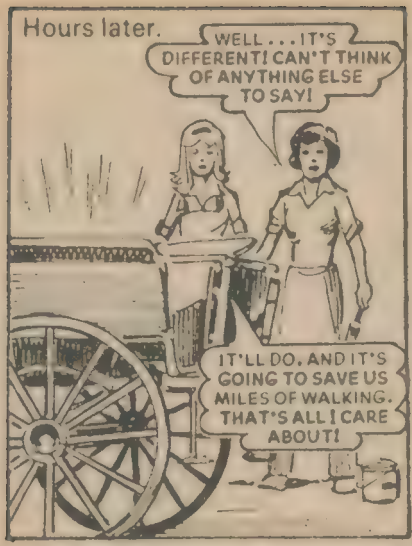
The first farm they came to belonged to a Mr Kearns.
WELL, I USED TO HAVE A CART, BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE AH. THERE IT IS.


Mr Kearns marched up to a great pile of straw and set to work clearing it with a pitchfork.
HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT FOR IT, MR KEARNS?
YOU CAN HAVE IT FOR NOTHING. NO USE TO ME. I'VE GOT THE HARNESS AS WELL. IT FITS ONE OF YOUR PONIES THE BLACK ONE, SINNER. I SOLD HIM TO MR GRENVILLE ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO. HE BOLTS, YOU KNOW.
YES, WE DID KNOW THAT!

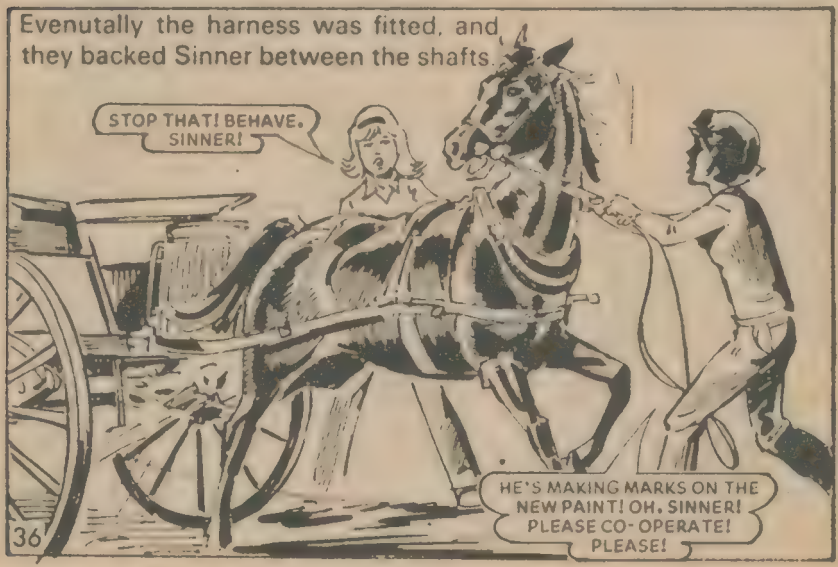
Mr Kearns fetched the harness and told the girls they could have it for nothing, too.
THANKS A LOT, MR KEARNS! WE'LL SOON SMARTEN IT UP.
FIRST WE HAVE TO GET IT TO THE STABLES! HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO THAT WITHOUT BRINGING SINNER BACK HERE?

Meg came up with the answer.
I FEEL A FOOL! I HOPE WE DON'T MEET UP WITH ANYONE.
ONLY ANOTHER MILE OR SO TO GO. AND WE'VE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR.
But . . .
DON'T TELL ME THAT THOSE ANIMALS ARE SO WEAK IT TAKES TWO OF THEM TO PULL ONE LITTLE CART! AND WHAT A CART! SCRUFFY—JUST LIKE YOU AND YOUR PONIES!
WHY DON'T YOU CLOSE YOUR MOUTH, DELIA, BEFORE SOMETHING JUMPS IN IT? MY FIST, FOR INSTANCE!
EASY, JILL! JUST IGNORE HER.

LIKE PEOPLE ARE IGNORING YOUR SO-CALLED RIDING SCHOOL? YOU'LL SOON GO BROKE!
I WISH I COULD THINK OF A SMART ANSWER TO THAT, MEG!
SAVE YOUR BREATH FOR THE WALK AHEAD. I WANT THIS CART PRESENTABLE BEFORE THE DAY IS OUT.
Back home.
WE'VE A LOAD OF DIFFERENT COLOURS, MEG. PERHAPS WE SHOULD BUY NEW, IN ONE SHADE.
CAN'T AFFORD IT. WASTE NOT, WANT NOT. IT'LL HAVE TO BE A COAT OF MANY COLOURS! RIGHT FIRST WE MUST SWEEP OUT THE BITS OF OLD STRAW AND THE COBWEBS. THEN WASH THE MUD OFF...


Hours later.
WELL . . . IT'S DIFFERENT! CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY!
IT'LL DO. AND IT'S GOING TO SAVE US MILES OF WALKING. THAT'S ALL I CARE ABOUT!

Sinner recognised his old cart the next morning. He stamped angrily.
CO-OPERATE, SINNER! OH! OH! WE'LL NEVER GET HIS HARNESS FITTED!
THAT'S NO WAY TO TALK, JILL. KEEP TRYING.


Evenutally the harness was fitted, and they backed Sinner between the shafts.
STOP THAT! BEHAVE, SINNER!
HE'S MAKING MARKS ON THE NEW PAINT! OH, SINNER! PLEASE CO-OPERATE! PLEASE!

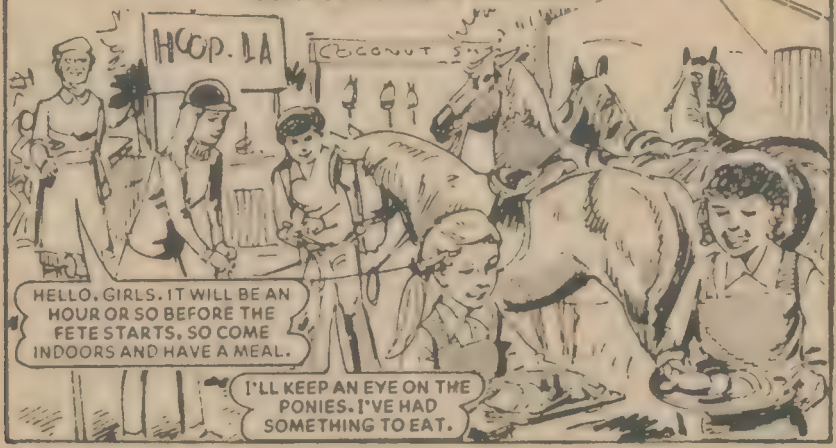
DON'T PLEAD - JUST TELL HIM. HI, SINNER!
MELINDA!

IT'S GREAT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!
THANKS! THIS IS MRS BLACKMORE. SHE'S IN CHARGE OF THE HOME. WE DROVE OVER IN HER CAR TO ASK A FAVOUR.
MELINDA TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU AND YOUR PONIES AND SHE SAID THAT YOU MAY BE WILLING TO HELP US IN A FUND-RAISING SCHEME.

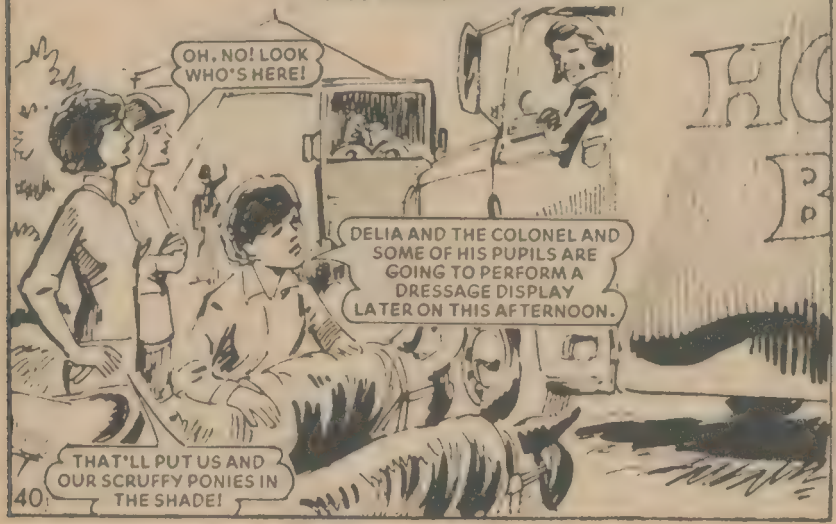
Mrs Blackmore explained that there was to be a garden fete at the Home on the coming Saturday.
WOULD YOU BRING THE PONIES ALONG AND GIVE RIDES TO THE KIDS, PLEASE?
IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT THE DISTANCE THERE'S A FARMER WITH A CATTLE TRUCK WILLING TO TAKE YOU TO THE HOME, AND BACK.
WELL . . . MEG?
O.K. BY ME.
THAT'S SETTLED THEN. COME INTO THE HOUSE AND HAVE A CUP OF TEA.

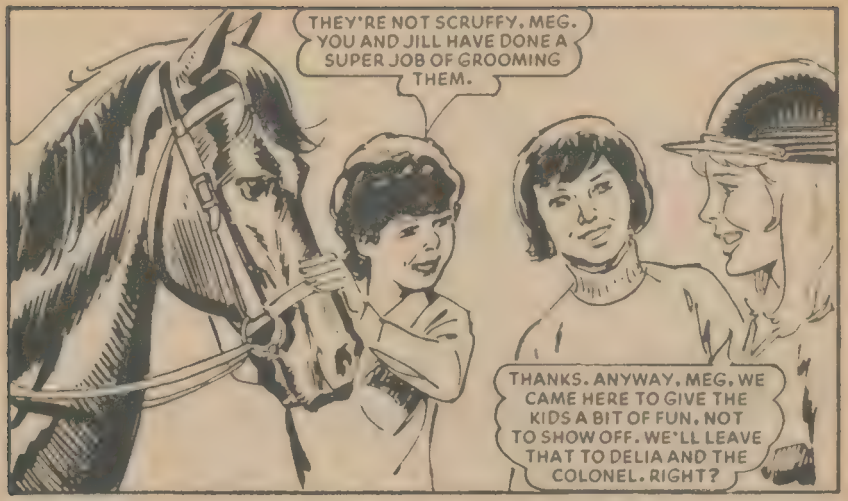
Later.
WE SHOULD BE GIVING ALL OUR TIME AND ATTENTION TO BOOSTING OUR OWN FUNDS. STILL, IT'S A GOOD CAUSE.
THAT'S FOR SURE, AND MAYBE IT'LL BE FUN. WE CAN USE A BIT OF THAT, AFTER ALL OUR HARD WORK.
On the Saturday morning.
THEY'RE A BIT CRAMPED, MEG. NO WONDER THEY LOOK SO MISERABLE!
THEY'LL BE OK, JILL. IT'S ONLY ABOUT AN HOUR'S DRIVE TO THE HOME. RIGHT—LET'S GET ABOARD.
THE STABLES LOOK A GREAT DEAL BETTER THAN IN OLD MR GRENVILLE'S TIME. BEEN WORKING HARD, EH?
I'LL SAY! THERE'S STILL PLENTY TO BE DONE THOUGH, AND NOT MUCH MONEY TO DO IT WITH.
IT'S ALL OUTGOINGS AND NO MONEY COMING IN!

At the Home, a little ride had been marked out and a rope fastened between two trees.


HOOP-LA
COCONUT
HELLO, GIRLS. IT WILL BE AN HOUR OR SO BEFORE THE FETE STARTS. SO COME INDOORS AND HAVE A MEAL.
I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON THE PONIES. I'VE HAD SOMETHING TO EAT.

After lunch, the girls came back outdoors in time to see three horse boxes arrive.


OH, NO! LOOK WHO'S HERE!
DELIA AND THE COLONEL AND SOME OF HIS PUPILS ARE GOING TO PERFORM A DRESSAGE DISPLAY LATER ON THIS AFTERNOON.
THAT'LL PUT US AND OUR SCRUFFY PONIES IN THE SHADE!

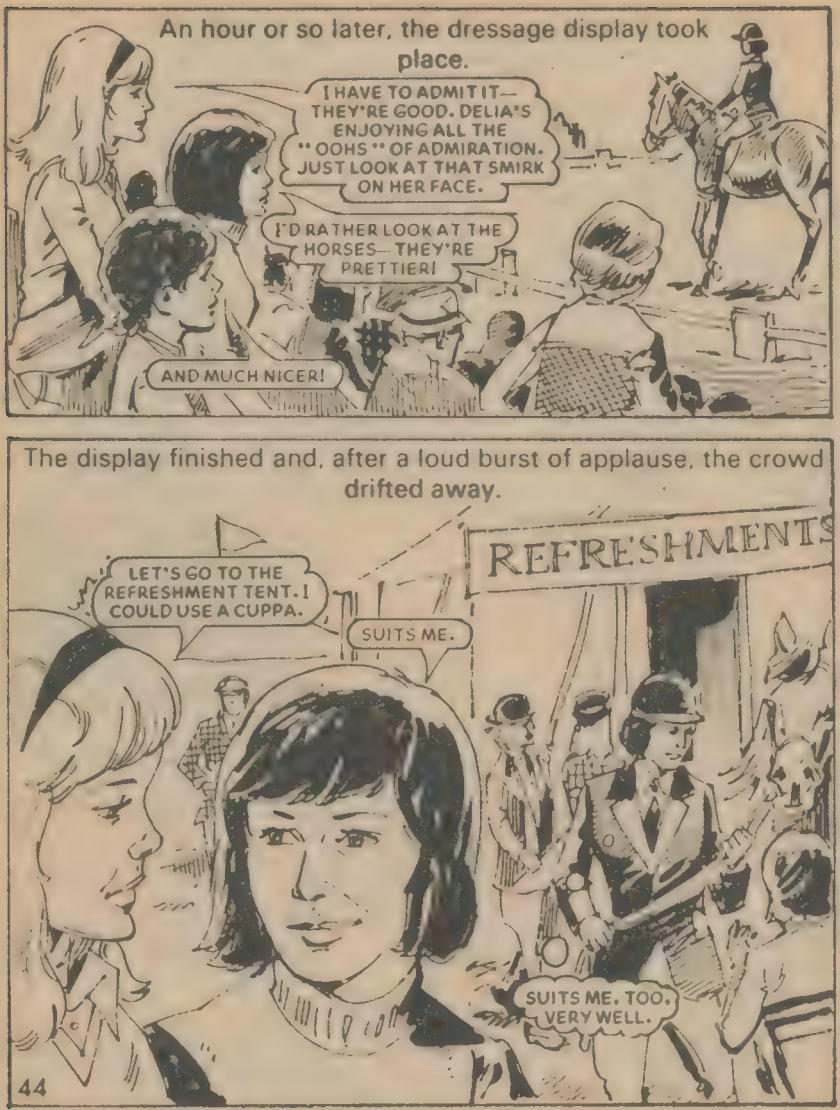

THEY'RE NOT SCRUFFY, MEG. YOU AND JILL HAVE DONE A SUPER JOB OF GROOMING THEM.
THANKS. ANYWAY, MEG, WE CAME HERE TO GIVE THE KIDS A BIT OF FUN, NOT TO SHOW OFF. WE'LL LEAVE THAT TO DELIA AND THE COLONEL. RIGHT?

A little later, a local dignitary declared the fete open, and there was a rush of children to the ponies.

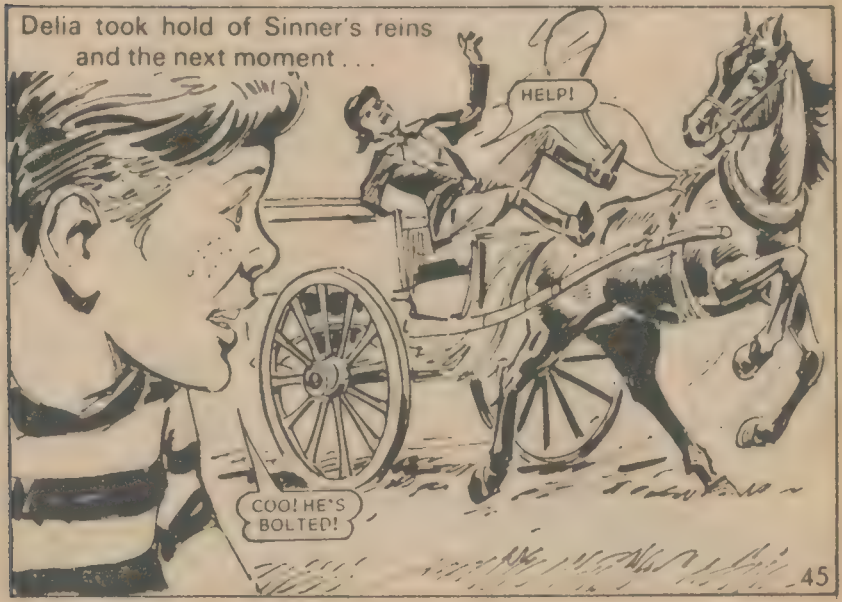
THE PONIES ARE LOVING ALL THE ATTENTION THEY'RE GETTING. EVEN SINNER LOOKS PLEASED!
HOOPL
AND IF HIPSTER WERE A CAT, HE'D BE PURRING! HE'S GETTING MORE ATTENTION BECAUSE OF HIS SIZE. RIGHT, LET'S GET STARTED.

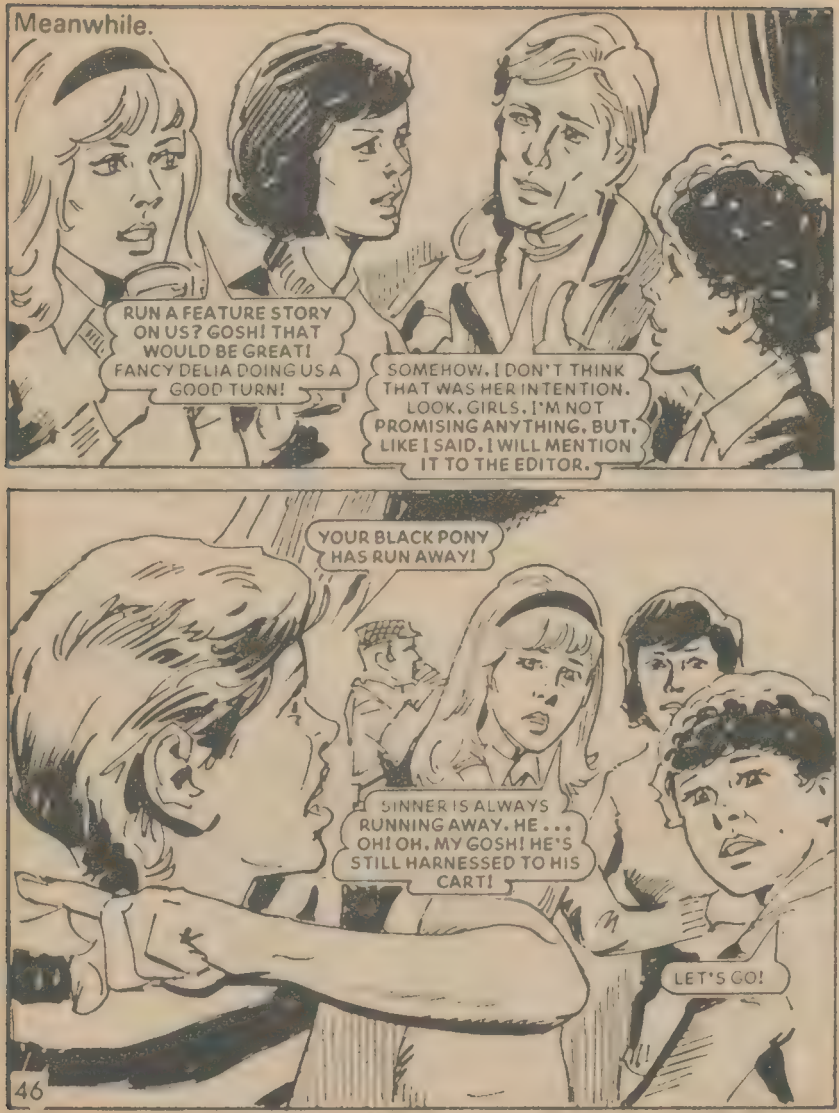
Melinda drove the cart while Meg and Jill led Hipster and Pru.
I'M GETTING SOME GOOD PICS. SHOULD PLEASE MY EDITOR.
YOU'RE FROM THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER, AREN'T YOU? I'M DELIA MADISON— COLONEL HUTCHINS' ASSISTANT. OUR DRESSAGE DISPLAY STARTS SOON AND I KNOW YOU'LL WANT TO TAKE A LOT OF PICTURES OF IT.
JUST A FEW, MISS MADISON. I THINK THIS SUMS UP THE SPIRIT OF THE FETE BETTER. THE KIDS LOOK SO HAPPY.
THEY'RE AN ATTRACTIVE PAIR. GOOD WITH KIDS, TOO. VERY PATIENT. NICE OF THEM TO GIVE THEIR TIME AND THE USE OF THEIR PONIES.
OH, THEY'VE PLENTY OF TIME TO SPARE! THE STABLES THEY OWN IS A DEAD LOSS. THEY HAVEN'T ANY PUPILS.

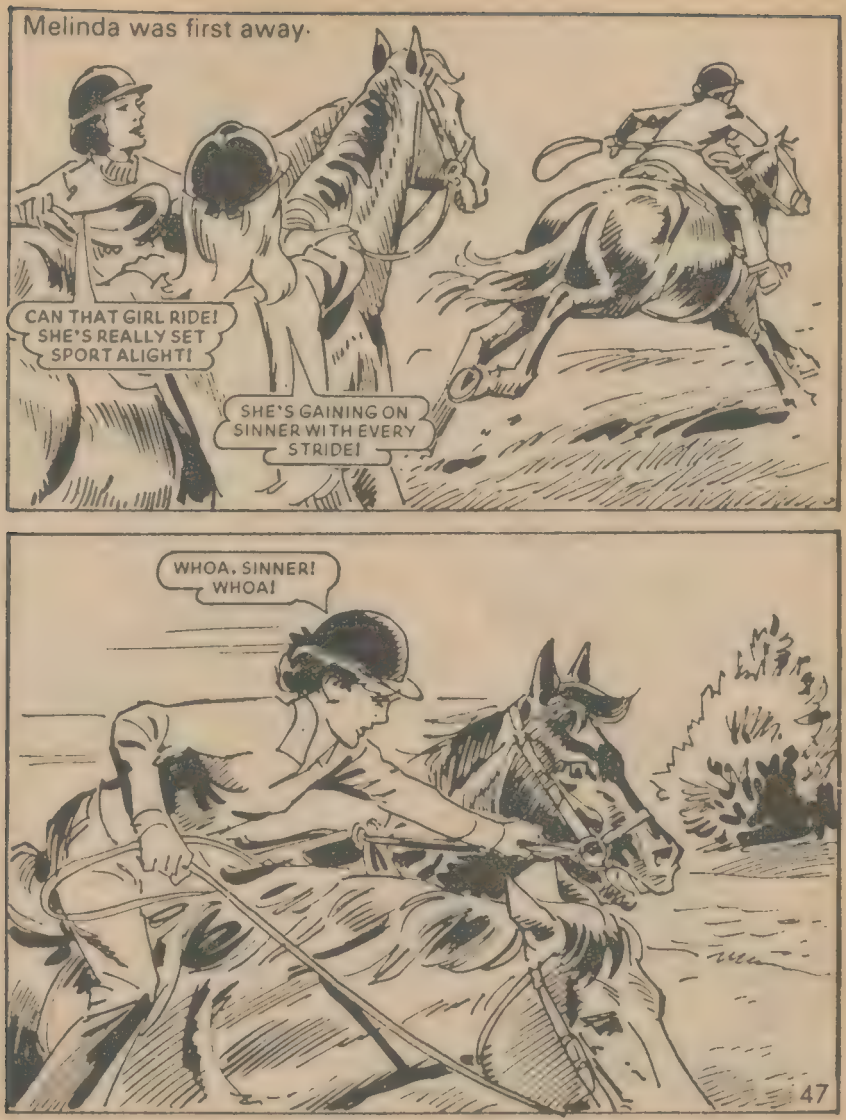
THEY TALK ABOUT FIGHTING TO SAVE THEIR STABLES, BUT THEY NEVER WILL. THEY'RE NO COMPETITION FOR COLONEL HUTCHINS. HIS ESTABLISHMENT IS SO WELL RUN. PERHAPS YOUR PAPER WOULD LIKE TO DO A FEATURE STORY ON IT, WITH PHOTOGRAPHS?
I DOUBT IT, MISS MADISON. TOO RUN OF THE MILL.
THE GIRLS FIGHT TO SAVE THEIR STABLES WOULD HAVE MORE APPEAL. HUMAN INTEREST STUFF. I'LL MENTION IT TO MY EDITOR.
OH, NO! I WISH I'D KEPT MY MOUTH SHUT NOW!


An hour or so later, the dressage display took place.
I HAVE TO ADMIT IT— THEY'RE GOOD. DELIA'S ENJOYING ALL THE "OOHS" OF ADMIRATION. JUST LOOK AT THAT SMIRK ON HER FACE.
I'D RATHER LOOK AT THE HORSES— THEY'RE PRETTIER!
AND MUCH NICER!
The display finished and, after a loud burst of applause, the crowd drifted away.
REFRESHMENTS
LET'S GO TO THE REFRESHMENT TENT. I COULD USE A CUPPA.
SUITS ME.
SUITS ME, TOO. VERY WELL.

MOST OF THE CROWD HAD GONE TO THE REFRESHMENT TENT. GOOD! COAST IS CLEAR FOR ME TO GET TO WORK. I DID THAT PAIR A GOOD TURN WITHOUT MEANING TO. NOW I'LL EVEN THINGS UP.


Delia took hold of Sinner's reins and the next moment . . .
HELP!
COO! HE'S BOLTED!


Meanwhile.
RUN A FEATURE STORY ON US? GOSH! THAT WOULD BE GREAT! FANCY DELIA DOING US A GOOD TURN!
SOMEHOW, I DON'T THINK THAT WAS HER INTENTION. LOOK, GIRLS, I'M NOT PROMISING ANYTHING, BUT, LIKE I SAID, I WILL MENTION IT TO THE EDITOR.
YOUR BLACK PONY HAS RUN AWAY!
SINNER IS ALWAYS RUNNING AWAY. HE... OH! OH, MY GOSH! HE'S STILL HARNESSED TO HIS CART!
LET'S GO!


Melinda was first away.
CAN THAT GIRL RIDE! SHE'S REALLY SET SPORT ALIGHT!
SHE'S GAINING ON SINNER WITH EVERY STRIDE!
WHOA, SINNER! WHOA!

The cart skidded round on one wheel and rocked violently. As it did so . . .
DELIA!
WHAT WAS SHE DOING IN OUR CART?
I ER I . . . OH! WHAT A HORRID DAY!

SHE WAS UP TO NO GOOD. THAT'S FOR SURE.
AND SINNER TAUGHT HER A LESSON. GOOD FOR YOU, SINNER!
I'LL GIVE YOU AN APPLE WHEN WE GET HOME, SINNER! HEY! LOOK! THERE'S THAT NICE PHOTOGRAPHER!
HE'S TAKING A PICTURE OF DELIA! OH, GREAT! WHAT A DAY!
A REALLY GOOD ONE— FOR US!

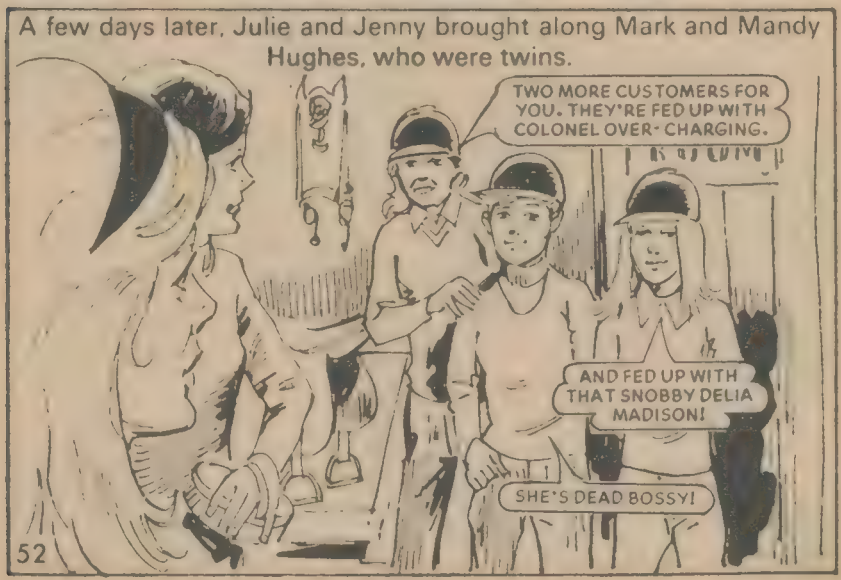
A week or so after the fete, Jill went into town to collect the groceries When she returned

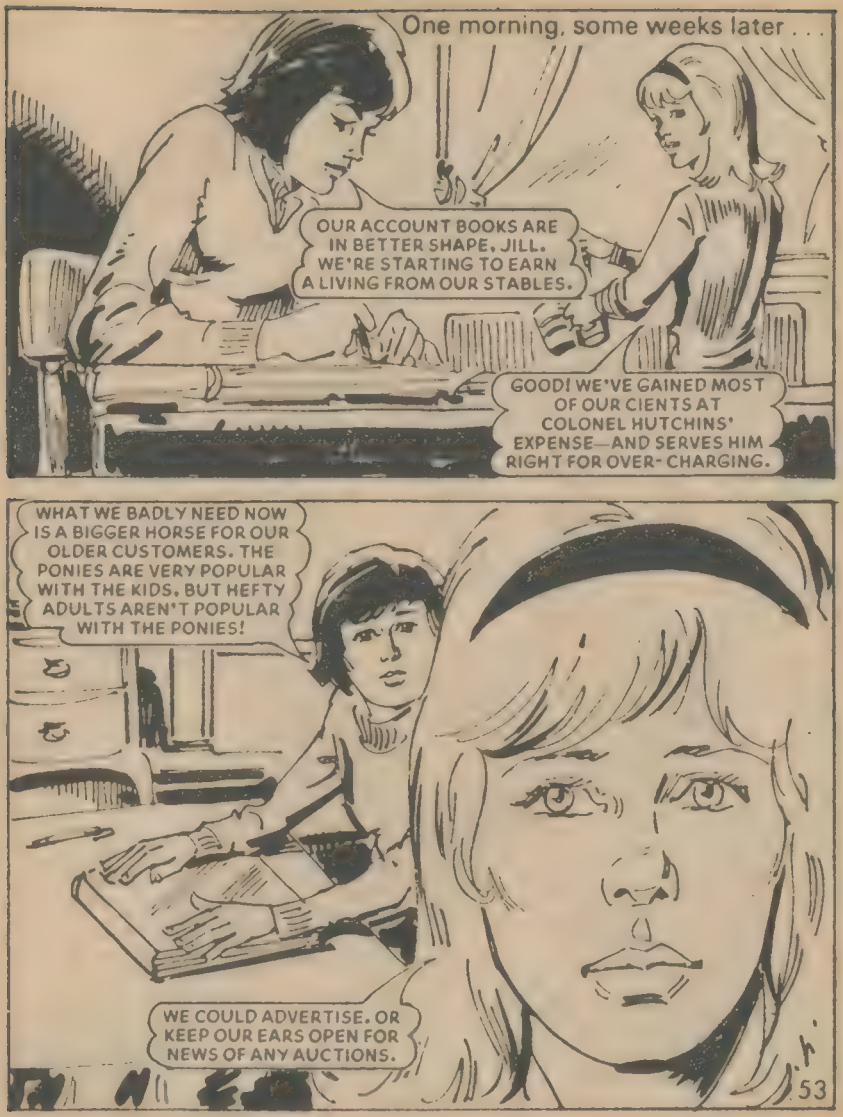
I BOUGHT A COPY OF THE COUNTY NEWSPAPER, MEG, AND THERE'S AN ARTICLE ON US IN IT, COMPLETE WITH PHOTOS.
GREAT!
THEY'VE DONE US PROUD, AND THE PICTURES OF OUR PONIES ARE SUPER.
MANCHESTER
GAZETTE
LOCAL GIRLS
WE'RE FAMOUS. LET'S HOPE IT BRINGS US SOME CUSTOMERS!

The next morning.
HI! CAN WE HELP YOU?
HOPE SO. I'M JENNY REID AND THIS IS MY FRIEND, JULIE HALL. WE READ ABOUT YOUR STABLES IN THE PAPER AND THOUGHT WE'D CALL IN AND ASK HOW MUCH YOU CHARGE FOR RIDING LESSONS.
The answer met with warm approval.
THAT'S FINE! MUCH LESS THAN COLONEL HUTCHINS CHARGES. MY MOTHER SAYS HIS PRICES ARE FAR TOO HIGH.
MY FATHER SAYS HE'LL PRICE HIMSELF OUT OF BUSINESS.
WE'D LIKE TO HIRE TWO PONIES, PLEASE. FOR THE MORNING. I LIKE THIS ONE! HE'S SWEET.
THAT'S HIPSTER. HOW ABOUT YOU, JENNY?
I'LL TAKE THE BAY, PLEASE. WE'RE GOOD ENOUGH RIDERS. PERHAPS, THOUGH, YOU'D LIKE TO RIDE OUT WITH US THIS TIME? JUST TO PUT YOUR MINDS AT REST.

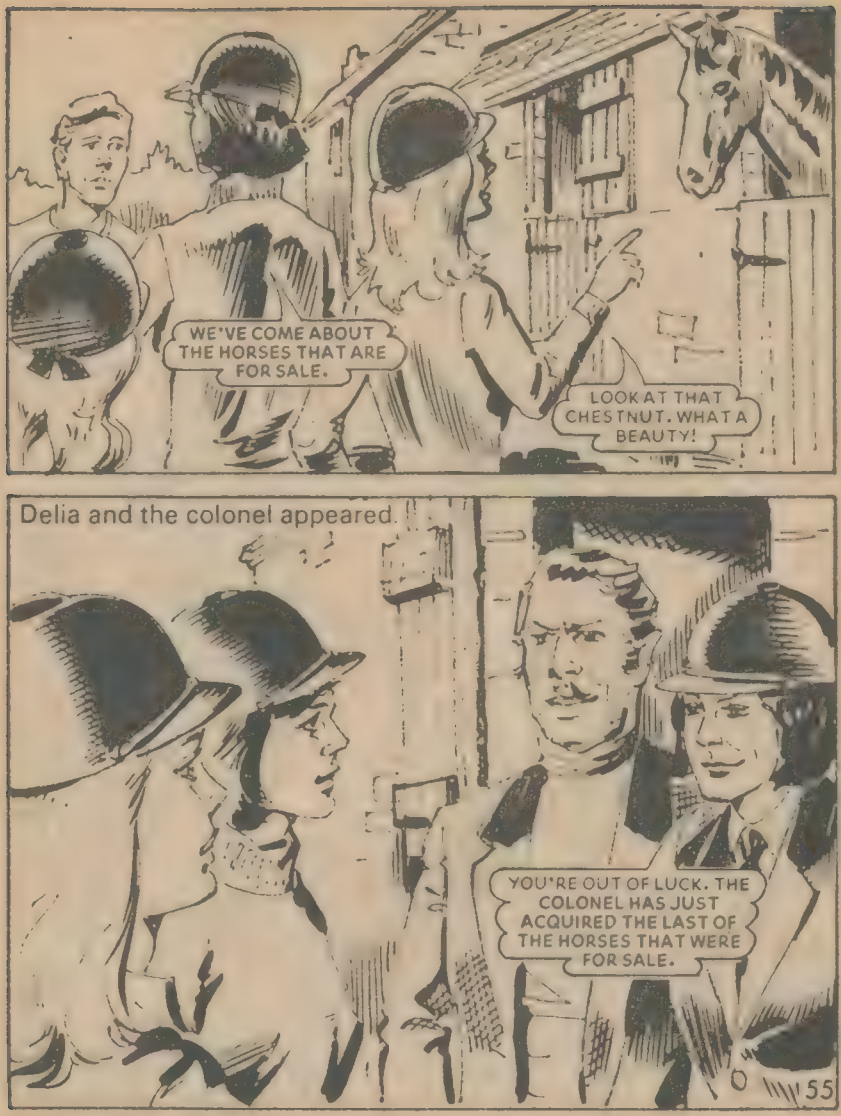
Later
WE WON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT PAIR. THEY'RE HANDLING THEIR MOUNTS WELL. NICE KIDS. I LIKE THEM.
ME, TOO! AND THEY'RE SPECIAL, MEG OUR VERY FIRST CUSTOMERS.

A few days later, Julie and Jenny brought along Mark and Mandy Hughes, who were twins.


TWO MORE CUSTOMERS FOR YOU. THEY'RE FED UP WITH COLONEL OVER-CHARGING.
AND FED UP WITH THAT SNOBBY DELIA MADISON!
SHE'S DEAD BOSSY!


One morning, some weeks later . . .
OUR ACCOUNT BOOKS ARE IN BETTER SHAPE, JILL. WE'RE STARTING TO EARN A LIVING FROM OUR STABLES.
GOOD! WE'VE GAINED MOST OF OUR CIENTS AT COLONEL HUTCHINS' EXPENSE—AND SERVES HIM RIGHT FOR OVER-CHARGING.
WHAT WE BADLY NEED NOW IS A BIGGER HORSE FOR OUR OLDER CUSTOMERS. THE PONIES ARE VERY POPULAR WITH THE KIDS, BUT HEFTY ADULTS AREN'T POPULAR WITH THE PONIES!
WE COULD ADVERTISE. OR KEEP OUR EARS OPEN FOR NEWS OF ANY AUCTIONS.

Jenny and Julie appeared.
MORNING. A FRIEND OF MINE HEARD ABOUT A LOT OF HORSES THAT WERE SOLD. I THINK THERE ARE SOME BIG ONES THEY HAVEN'T GOT RID OF YET. WANT ME TO TAKE YOU?
I COULD TAKE CARE OF THINGS HERE UNTIL YOU GOT BACK.
THE AUCTION IS BEING HELD NEAR HERE. WE COULD RIDE THERE IN NEXT TO NO TIME.
RIGHT THEN LET'S SADDLE THE PONIES AND BE ON OUR WAY.
WOW! THIS IS REALLY SOMETHING. DEAD POSH! BET THE HORSES ARE, TOO.
STABLES ARE ROUND TO THE BACK. MIGHT AS WELL GO STRAIGHT THERE.
STILL, THERE MIGHT BE ONE IN OUR PRICE RANGE.

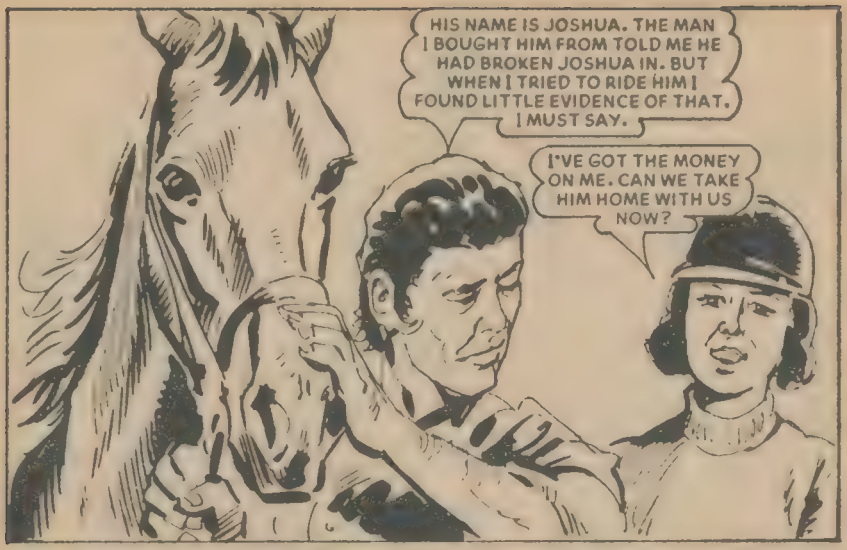

WE'VE COME ABOUT THE HORSES THAT ARE FOR SALE.
LOOK AT THAT CHESTNUT. WHAT A BEAUTY!
Delia and the colonel appeared.
YOU'RE OUT OF LUCK. THE COLONEL HAS JUST ACQUIRED THE LAST OF THE HORSES THAT WERE FOR SALE.
55

Back at the stables.
NO LUCK, I'M AFRAID. HOW HAVE THINGS BEEN HERE?
YOU LOST SOME CUSTOMERS GROWN-UPS WHO WANTED SOMETHING BIGGER THAN PONIES TO RIDE.
IT'S A SHAME. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE CUSTOMERS.
WELL, WE'LL JUST HAVE TO KEEP OUR EYES OPEN FOR ANY GOOD, BIG HORSES. DUMP THE TACK AND WE'LL GO AND HAVE A CUP OF COFFEE . . .

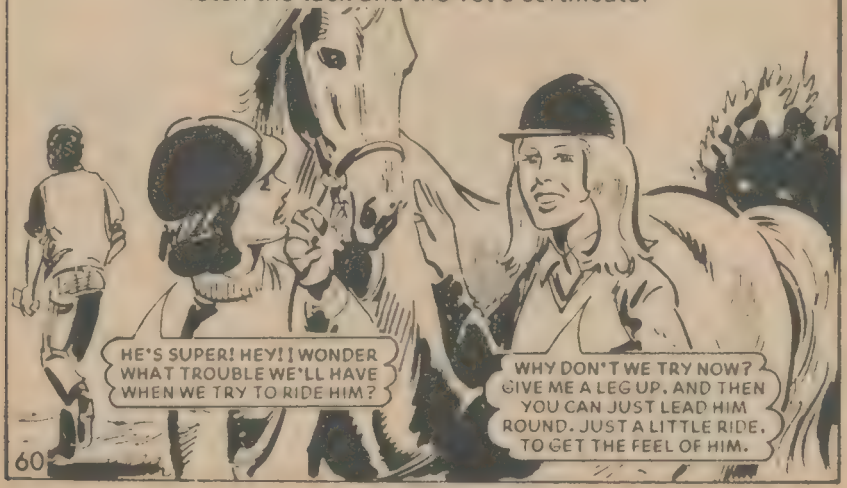
Half an hour later...
I THOUGHT I'D COME AND TELL YOU ABOUT SOME HORSES THAT ARE UP FOR SALE. THEY BELONG TO TRAVELLING PEOPLE CAMPED NEAR THE RIVER.
VERY GENEROUS OF YOU, DELIA. WHAT'S THE SNAG?
THE REASON I'M TELLING YOU ABOUT THE HORSES IS THAT THE COLONEL DOESN'T WANT ANY OF THEM. HE SAID THEY MIGHT BE IN YOUR PRICE RANGE!
THANK YOU FOR TELLING US ABOUT THEM, DELIA. WE'LL CERTAINLY GO ALONG TO SEE THEM.
I'D HAVE WIPED THAT SMIRK OFF HER FACE, MEG, IF I HADN'T BEEN SO STARTLED BY YOUR POLITENESS!
I KNOW THE PLACE WHERE THOSE FOLK ARE CAMPED. I'LL SHOW YOU . . .
IT SURPRISED DELIA, TOO--AND DISAPPOINTED HER. THAT WAS THE IDEA! SHE HOPED TO ANNOY US. NOW, LET'S GO AND TAKE A LOOK AT THOSE HORSES.

HERE WE ARE.
THEY'RE NO GOOD! THEY'RE ALL THE SAME SIZE AS SINNER. WE NEED A HORSE, NOT ANOTHER PONY.
I BET DELIA KNEW IT WAS JUST PONIES FOR SALE. SHE WANTED US TO WASTE OUR TIME!
HELLO, THERE. CAN I HELP YOU?
WE WERE TOLD YOU WERE SELLING THESE ANIMALS, BUT WHAT WE WANTED WAS A HORSE. WE ALREADY HAVE FIVE PONIES AT OUR RIDING SCHOOL, AND WE NEED A HORSE FOR OUR ADULT CUSTOMERS.

WE'RE LOSING A LOT OF BUSINESS THROUGH NOT HAVING ANYTHING OVER FIFTEEN HANDS... MR—ER..?
SMITH. JOHN SMITH. OVER FIFTEEN HANDS... I'VE GOT A FIVE-YEAR-OLD WHO'S A BIT OF A HANDFUL. BUT IF YOU DON'T MIND PROBLEMS HE SHOULD SUIT YOU. HE IS SOUND. I'VE GOT A CERTIFICATE FROM THE LOCAL VET.
John Smith went round to the back of his caravan. Then
OH! HE'S HUGE!
WHOA. NOW... EASY ...GOOD BOY. COME - COME. THAT'S MY BOY! GOOD LAD!
SIXTEEN HANDS. AT LEAST! I LIKE HIS LOOKS! HOW MUCH WERE YOU HOPING TO GET FOR HIM. MR SMITH?
THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY POUNDS. AND THAT INCLUDES HIS TACK—IF YOU WANT IT.
WE DO. NONE OF THE TACK WE HAVE AT THE STABLES WOULD FIT HIM. WE'LL TAKE HIM.
WHAT'S HIS NAME? HAS HE BEEN BROKEN IN?

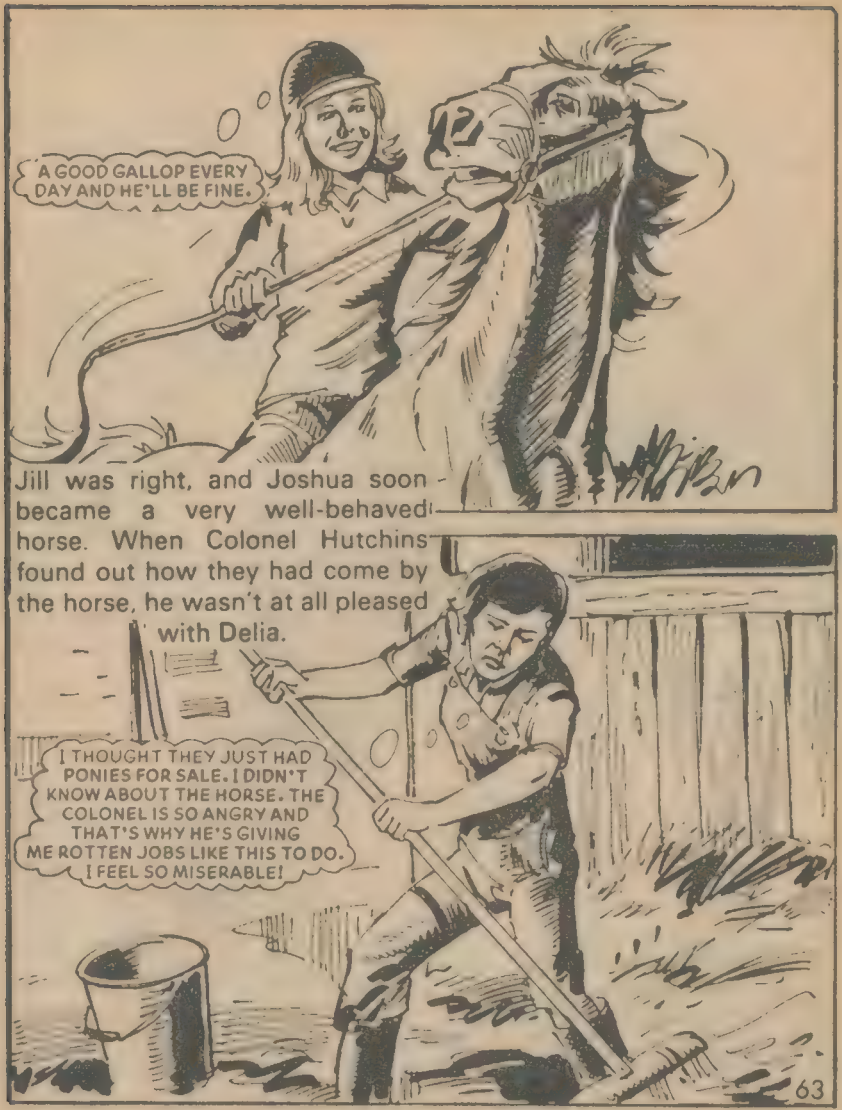

HIS NAME IS JOSHUA. THE MAN I BOUGHT HIM FROM TOLD ME HE HAD BROKEN JOSHUA IN. BUT WHEN I TRIED TO RIDE HIM I FOUND LITTLE EVIDENCE OF THAT. I MUST SAY.
I'VE GOT THE MONEY ON ME. CAN WE TAKE HIM HOME WITH US NOW?

John Smith gave a relieved nod, took the money and went off to fetch the tack and the vet's certificate.


HE'S SUPER! HEY! I WONDER WHAT TROUBLE WE'LL HAVE WHEN WE TRY TO RIDE HIM?
WHY DON'T WE TRY NOW? GIVE ME A LEG UP, AND THEN YOU CAN JUST LEAD HIM ROUND. JUST A LITTLE RIDE, TO GET THE FEEL OF HIM.

IT'S LIKE SITTING ON TOP OF A MOUNTAIN! YOU LOOK LIKE A COUPLE OF ANTS!
YOU'RE IN THE CLOUDS!
COME ON, BOY! COME ON, JOSHUA! HE WON'T BUDGE, JILL. HE . . . OH!
HELP!
JUMP OFF!

But it was too late. Joshua was on the move.
I MUST GET BOTH HANDS TO THAT ROPE!
GOT 'EM! NOW, SLOW DOWN, YOU SILLY HORSE, SLOW DOWN!
IT'S ALMOST AS THOUGH YOU JUST WANT TO HAVE A GALLOP AND STRETCH YOUR LEGS. I'LL LET YOU GALLOP AND YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT THEN, WON'T YOU?


A GOOD GALLOP EVERY DAY AND HE'LL BE FINE.
Jill was right, and Joshua soon became a very well-behaved horse. When Colonel Hutchins found out how they had come by the horse, he wasn't at all pleased with Delia.
I THOUGHT THEY JUST HAD PONIES FOR SALE. I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE HORSE. THE COLONEL IS SO ANGRY AND THAT'S WHY HE'S GIVING ME ROTTEN JOBS LIKE THIS TO DO. I FEEL SO MISERABLE!

BUSINESS WAS BRISK AGAIN TODAY, JILL. SHOULD BE ABLE TO AFFORD TO BUY ANOTHER HORSE SOON. WE'VE DONE IT, JILL.
YES, IT'S GOODBYE TO HEARTBREAKS FROM NOW ON. WE'VE SAVED OUR STABLES!

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Plenty Problems

Janet Masters works for Universal Escorts, a firm that provides escorts for anybody—anywhere!

Janet looks after young folk in particular, and her work gives her lots of problems, as you will find out when you meet the girl who is everybody's –

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